

Chapter 2: Planning Process

2 Documenting the Planning Process

Documentation of the planning process, including public involvement, is required to meet FEMA's DMA 2000 (44CFR§201.4(c)(1) and §201.6(c)(1)). This section includes a description of the planning process used to develop this plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how all of the involved agencies participated.

2.1.1 Description of the Planning Process

The Jerome County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving all of the organizations and agencies detailed in Section 1.0 of this document. The County's local coordinator contacted these organizations directly to invite their participation and schedule meetings of the planning committee. The planning process included 5 distinct phases which were in some cases sequential (step 1 then step 2) and in some cases intermixed (step 4 completed though out the process):

1. **Collection of Data** about the extent and periodicity of wildfires in and around Jerome County. This included an area encompassing Jerome, Twin Falls and Minidoka Counties to insure a robust dataset for making inferences about fires in Jerome County specifically; this included a wildfire extent and ignition profile.
2. **Field Observations and Estimations** about wildfire risks including fuels assessments, juxtaposition of structures and infrastructure to wildland fuels, access, and potential treatments by wildfire specialists, rural fire chiefs and representatives of the BLM.
3. **Mapping** of data relevant to wildfire control and treatments, structures, resource values, infrastructure, fire prone landscapes, and related data.
4. **Facilitation of Public Involvement** from the formation of the planning committee, to a public mail survey, news releases, public meetings, public review of draft documents, and acceptance of the final plan by the signatory representatives.
5. **Analysis and Drafting of the Report** to integrate the results of the planning process, providing ample review and integration of committee and public input, followed by acceptance of the final document.

Planning efforts were led by the Project Director, Dr. William E. Schlosser, of Northwest Management, Inc. Dr. Schlosser holds 4 degrees in natural resource management (A.S. geology; B.S. forest and range management; M.S. natural resource economic & finance; Ph.D. environmental science and regional planning). Project Specialist John T. McGee led community and committee involvement efforts. Fire Management specialists Ken Homik and Dennis Thomas coordinated fire mitigation planning recommendations. Together, they led a team of resource professionals that included fire mitigation specialists, wildfire control specialists, resource management professionals, and hazard mitigation experts.

They were the point-people for team members to share data and information with during the plan's development. They and the planning team met with many residents of the county during the inspections of communities, infrastructure, and hazard abatement assessments. This methodology, when coupled with the other approaches in this process, worked effectively to integrate a wide spectrum of observations and interpretations about the project.

The planning philosophy employed in this project included the open and free sharing of information with interested parties. Information from federal and state agencies was integrated into the database of knowledge used in this project. Meetings with the committee were held throughout the planning process to facilitate a sharing of information between cooperators.

When the public meetings were held, many of the committee members were in attendance and shared their support and experiences with the planning process and their interpretations of the results.

2.2 Public Involvement

Public involvement in this plan was made a priority from the inception of the project. There were a number of ways that public involvement was sought and facilitated. In some cases this led to members of the public providing information and seeking an active role in protecting their own homes and businesses, while in other cases it led to the public becoming more aware of the process without becoming directly involved in the planning process.

2.2.1 News Releases

Under the auspices of the Jerome County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Planning Committee, news releases were submitted to the Northside News in Jerome and the Times News in Twin Falls. Press releases sent out to three area radio stations KEZJ, KART, and KLIX.

2.2.1.1 Radio Messages

A short news release was aired over the KEZJ, KART, and KLIX radio stations the week of August 9th, 2004 to announcing the goals of the planning committee, the purpose of the mitigation plan, the date and times of public meetings, and contact information.

2.2.1.2 Newspaper Articles

Committee and public meeting announcements were submitted to the **Northside News** and the **Times News**. A newspaper article ran in the **Northside News** on August 10th entitled “Jerome County Plans to Mitigate Risk.” The article outlined the intent of the plan and how the planning process would progress. The following is an example of one of the newspaper announcements that was submitted to the local newspaper.



Jerome County plans to mitigate wildfire risk

The Jerome County Commissioners have created a Wildfire Mitigation Plan Committee to complete a Wildfire Mitigation Plan for Jerome County as part of the National Fire Plan authorized by Congress and the Whitehouse.

The Jerome County Wildfire Mitigation Plan will include risk analysis at the community level with predictive models for where fires are likely to ignite and where they are likely to spread rapidly once ignited.

Northwest Management,

Inc., has been retained by Jerome County to provide wildfire risk assessments, mapping, field inspections, and interviews, and to collaborate with the committee to prepare the plan. The committee includes rural and wildland fire districts, land managers, elected officials, agency representatives, and others.

Northwest Management specialists are conducting analyses of fire-prone landscapes and making recommendations for potential treatments. Specific activities for

homes, structures, infrastructure, and resource capabilities will be proposed as part of the analysis.

One of the most important steps in gathering information about fire risk in Jerome County is to conduct a homeowners' survey. Northwest Management, Inc., in cooperation with local fire officials, have mailed a brief survey to randomly selected homeowners in the county seeking details about home construction materials, proximity to water sources, and other risk factors surrounding homes.

This survey is very important to the success of the plan. Those homes that receive a survey are asked to please take the time to complete it, thereby benefiting the community overall.

The planning team will be conducting public meetings to discuss preliminary findings and to seek public involvement in the planning process in September.

For more information on the Fire Mitigation Plan projects in Jerome County, contact your County Commissioner, John McGee,

Northwest Management, Inc. Jerome County local coordinator, at (208) 459-8404, or Dennis Thomas or William Schlosser at the Northwest Management, Inc. office in Moscow, Idaho, at (208) 883-4488.

Public information meetings:

- Sept. 13, 7 to 9 p.m., Hazelton City Hall in Hazelton.

- Sept. 14, 7 to 9 p.m., Silver & Gold Senior Center in Eden.

- Sept. 15, 7 to 9 p.m., at Jerome County Courthouse in Jerome.

2.2.2 Public Mail Survey

In order to collect a broad base of perceptions about wildland fire and individual risk factors of homeowners in Jerome County, a mail survey was conducted. Using a state and county database of landowners in Jerome County, homeowners from the Wildland-Urban Interface surrounding each community were identified. In order to be included in the database, individuals were selected that own property and have a dwelling in Jerome County, as well as a mailing address in Jerome County. This database created a list of unique names to which was affixed a random number that contributed to the probability of being selected for the public mail survey. A total of 233 landowners meeting the above criteria were selected.

The public mail survey developed for this project has been used in the past by Northwest Management, Inc., during the execution of other WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plans. The survey used The Total Design Method (Dillman 1978) as a model to schedule the timing and content of letters sent to the selected recipients. Copies of each cover letter, mail survey, and communication are included in Appendix III.

The first in the series of mailing was sent August 6, 2004, and included a cover letter, a survey, and an offer of receiving a custom GIS map of the area of their selection in Jerome County if they would complete and return the survey. The free map incentive was tied into assisting their community and helping their interests by participating in this process. Each letter also informed residents about the planning process. A return self-addressed envelope was included in each packet. A postcard reminder was sent to the non-respondents on August 16, 2004, encouraging their response. A final mailing, with a revised cover letter pleading with them to participate, was sent to non-respondents on August 24, 2004.

Surveys were returned during the months of July and August. A total of 109 residents responded to the survey (as of September 30, 2004 – *this will be updated until the final plan is completed*). No surveys were returned as undeliverable, and two responded that they no longer live in the area. The effective response rate for this survey was 48% (*to date*). Statistically, this response rate allows the interpretation of all of the response variables significantly at the 99% confidence level.

2.2.2.1 Survey Results

A summary of the survey's results will be presented here and then referred back to during the ensuing discussions on the need for various treatments, education, and other information. *Survey information will be updated until the completion of the plan.*

Of the survey respondents, 100% have a home within Jerome County. 96% of the respondents consider this their primary residence. About 4% of the respondents were from the Eden area, 8% were from the Hazelton area, 65% were from the Jerome area, and 24% were from other rural areas of the county.

Ninety-eight percent of the respondents correctly identified that they have emergency telephone 911 services in their area. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents correctly identified that they have structural fire protection, while one percent indicate that they do not have structural fire protection. This one percent did indeed have structural protection when they indicated that they were in an unprotected area.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of roofing material covering the main structure of their home. Seventy five percent of respondents indicated their homes were covered with a composite material (asphalt shingles). About 11% indicated their home were covered with a metal (eg., aluminum, tin) roofing material. Roughly 11% of the respondents indicated they have a wooden roofing material such as shakes or shingles. One percent of the respondents indicated that they have a ceramic tile roof, and 3% did not indicate what types of roofing material they had.

Residents were asked to evaluate the proximity of brush within certain distances of their homes. Often, the density of brush around a home is an indicator of increased fire risk. The results are presented in Table 2.1

Table 2.1 Survey responses indicating the proximity of brush to homes.		
% area in brush	Within 250 feet of your home	Within 75 feet of your home
No brush	50%	60%
Less than 10% of area	12%	17%
Between 10% and 25%	9%	12%
More than 25% of area	11%	3%

Ninety seven percent of those returning the survey indicated they have a lawn surrounding their home. Of these individual home sites, 89% indicated they keep this lawn green through the fire season. The remaining 11% did not indicate whether they kept their lawn green or not.

The average driveway length of the respondents was approximately 304 feet long, from their main road to their parking area. Roughly 1% of the respondents had a driveway over ½ mile long, and a corresponding 7% had a driveway over ¼ of a mile long. Of these homes with lengthy driveways, roughly 55% have turnouts allowing two vehicles to pass each other in the case of an emergency. Three percent of the respondents indicate that they have a bridge accessing their property, and that the bridge was adequate to support a heavy fire engine. Approximately 78% of all homeowners indicated they have an alternative escape route, with the remaining 22% indicating only one-way-in and one-way-out.

Nearly all respondents (99%) indicated they have some type of tools to use against a wildfire that threatens their home. Table 2.2 summarizes these responses.

Table 2.2. Percent of homes with indicated fire fighting tools in Jerome County.
99% – Hand tools (shovel, Pulaski, etc.)
4% – Portable water tank
6% – Stationery water tank
30% – Pond, lake, or stream water supply close

Table 2.2. Percent of homes with indicated fire fighting tools in Jerome County.

15% – Water pump and fire hose

13% – Equipment suitable for creating fire breaks (bulldozer, cat, skidder, etc.)

Roughly 10% of the respondents in Jerome County indicated they have someone in their household trained in wildland fire fighting. Approximately 9% indicated someone in the household had been trained in structural fire fighting. However, it is important to note that these questions did not specify a standard nor did it refer to how long ago the training was received. Ten percent of the respondents indicated that they had someone trained as a emergency medical technician in their household, 61% indicate that they have someone trained in first aid, and 12% indicate that they have someone in their household trained in search and rescue.

A couple of questions ask whether homeowners conduct periodic fire mitigation efforts on their property. Respondents were asked if they conduct a periodic fuels reduction program near their home sites, such as grass or brush burning. Fifty percent of the respondents indicate that they periodically burn or mow grass and brush in the vicinity of their home. Forty-four percent responded that livestock (cattle, horses, sheep) graze the grasses and forbs around their home sites.

Respondents were asked to complete a fuel hazard rating worksheet to assess their home's fire risk rating. An additional column titled "results" has been added to the table, showing the percent of respondents circling each rating (Table 2.3). Averages may not add to 100% due to non-responses to particular questions.

Circle the ratings in each category that best describes your home.

Table 2.3. Fuel Hazard Rating Worksheet		Rating	Results
Fuel Hazard	Small, light fuels (grasses, forbs, weeds, shrubs)	1	71%
	Medium size fuels (brush, large shrubs, small trees)	2	23%
	Heavy, large fuels (woodlands, timber, heavy brush)	3	0%
Slope Hazard	Mild slopes (0-5%)	1	86%
	Moderate slope (6-20%)	2	5%
	Steep Slopes (21-40%)	3	2%
	Extreme slopes (41% and greater)	4	0%
Structure Hazard	Noncombustible roof and noncombustible siding materials	1	35%
	Noncombustible roof and combustible siding material	3	17%
	Combustible roof and noncombustible siding material	7	20%
	Combustible roof and combustible siding materials	10	19%
Additional Factors	Rough topography that contains several steep canyons or ridges	+2	Average -2.0 pts
	Areas having history of higher than average fire occurrence	+3	
	Areas exposed to severe fire weather and strong winds	+4	
	Areas with existing fuel modifications or usable fire breaks	-3	
	Areas with local facilities (water systems, rural fire districts, dozers)	-3	

Calculating your risk

Values below are the average response value to each question.

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{Fuel hazard} & \underline{1.3} & \times \text{Slope Hazard } \underline{1.1} = \underline{2.4} \\
 \text{Structural hazard} & + & \underline{4.6} \\
 \text{Additional factors} & (+ \text{ or } -) & \underline{-2.0} \\
 \text{Total Hazard Points} & = & \underline{5.0}
 \end{array}$$

Table 2.4. Percent of respondents in each risk category as determined by the survey respondents.

00% – Extreme Risk = 26 + points
00% – High Risk = 16–25 points
35% – Moderate Risk = 6–15 points
53% – Low Risk = 6 or less points

Maximum household rating form score was 16 points, as assessed by the homeowners. These numbers were compared to observations made by field crews trained in wildland fire fighting.

These results indicate that for the most part, these indications are only slightly lower than the risk rating assigned by the “professionals”. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that Jerome County landowners involved in this survey have a more realistic view of wildfire risk than the landowners in other Idaho counties where these questions have been asked.

Finally, respondents were asked “if offered in your area, would members of your household attend a free, or low cost, one-day training seminar designed to teach homeowners in the wildland–urban interface how to improve the survivable space surrounding your home and adjacent outbuildings?” Approximately 47% of the respondents indicated a desire to participate in this type of training.

Homeowners were also asked, “How do you feel Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Mitigation projects should be funded in the areas surrounding homes, communities, and infrastructure such as power lines and major roads?” Responses are summarized in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5. Public Opinion of Wildfire Mitigation Funding Preferences.

	Mark the box that best applies to your preference		
	100% Public Funding	Cost-Share (Public & Private)	Privately Funded (Owner or Company)
Home Defensibility Projects	17%	50%	38%
Community Defensibility Projects	42%	35%	10%
Infrastructure Projects Roads, Bridges, Power Lines, Etc.	50%	17%	18%

2.2.2.2 Committee Meetings

The following list of people who participated in the planning committee meetings, volunteered time, or responded to elements of the Jerome County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan’s preparation.

- Joe RobinetteJerome Rural Fire District #1
- Donald UttFirst Segregation Fire District
- John ElorrietaJerome County
- John MooreSIRCOMM
- Julie ThomasMid-Snake Resource Conservation & Development
- Jim AuclairJerome City Fire Department
- Dan Daniels.....Jerome City Fire Department
- Rochelle AhrensSawtooth National Forest
- Art BrownJerome County Planning and Zoning
- Clint Blackwood.....Disaster Services Coordinator
- Curtis JensenBureau of Land Management
- Dennis S. Thomas.....Northwest Management, Inc.
- John McGeeNorthwest Management, Inc.

- Ken Homik.....Northwest Management, Inc.
- Toby BrownNorthwest Management, Inc.
- William E. SchlosserNorthwest Management, Inc.

Committee Meetings were scheduled and held on the following dates:

February 24, 2004

John McGee opened the first meeting of the Jerome County Fire Mitigation Planning Committee with introductions and an overview of the planning process. He also discussed specific information that members of the committee would have to provide to develop a complete mitigation plan. Contact information was exchanged between the committee members.

- **Schedule of Meetings:** NMI would like to hold one meeting each month until the conclusion of the planning process. The fourth Monday of every month at 11 am was approved by the committee. (Feb. 24, March 22, April 26, etc.) The Jerome EMS building conference is a central location.
- **Map Products:** NMI developed several GIS maps showing landowners, fire districts, past fires, and fire prone landscapes. The committee reviewed these maps and made corrections. NMI will update the maps for the next meeting. The committee was asked to provide any additional GIS information that may be available to Dr. Schlosser.
- **Resources and Capabilities Guide:** John explained the type of information that needed to be included in the survey handed out to all of the fire districts. This information will be made into a booklet including 8 ½ by 11 district maps. This will become a summary of available resources that all emergency response agencies will have a copy of.
- **Fire Risk Assessments:** NMI personnel has made site visits to all of the identified communities in Jerome County. A summary of observations about the fuels in each community, the access, and potential mitigation treatments will be handed out hopefully at the next meeting. If any of the committee members has past, current, or future fire mitigation projects planned, please provide this information to either directly to John or NMI.
- **Public Involvement:** John explained the importance of public involvement to the planning process. Committee members were encouraged to invite interested community members to the meetings. The public surveys will be sent out in the next few weeks to gather feedback from residents. The County Assessor's office is supposed to provide a mailing list. Public meetings will also be held to share information and facilitate public input. The committee will be the first to review the draft document, then it goes out for public review. County Commissioners will have the final approval.

March 22, 2004

John McGee began the meeting by making introductions and updating the committee on NMI's accomplishments since the last meeting. The location and date (April 26) of the next meeting was confirmed.

NMI brought new maps for the committee to review. The committee was asked to review the maps one more time and make any final corrections. The final maps will be completed by next month's meeting.

The Resources and Capabilities Guide was discussed at length. There are a number of potential resource and capability enhancements that need to be identified by the rural and wildland fire fighting districts. All of the needs identified by the districts are in line with increasing

the ability to respond to emergencies in the WUI and are fully supported by the planning committee. Fire chiefs need to email their surveys to John or NMI ASAP. The committee came up with a list of specific needs:

- Night vision camera – infra red
- Jerome Rural needs a 2nd station near the Flying J
- Need to expand the training room in the Eden building
- Build a central training center for the Magic Valley
- Training needs to be available more than once a year
- Volunteer retirement system and benefits
- Grant writer and researcher
- Need to start conversion from dual band to narrow band radio system
- Improve communications between Southern Idaho Dispatch and SIRCOMM
- Need a repeater by the transfer station to remove dead spots
- Eden needs a water tender, new trucks, and a structure
- If a new satellite station is built near Jerome, they will need trucks to staff
- Access to a helicopter
- Breathing apparatus and wildland fire fighting gear
- HazMat contamination unit
- Building, training, and equipment for new EMS-ambulance in eastern Jerome County

April 26, 2004

John McGee began the meeting by making introductions and updating the committee on NMI's progress since the last meeting. The committee confirmed June 14th at the EMS building for the next meeting.

Copies of the community assessments draft document were handed out to the committee to be reviewed. Changes can be made by calling or emailing John or Dr. Schlosser. Ken Homik from NMI is trying to schedule meetings with fire districts to discuss Resources and Capabilities surveys and to make possible changes to the community assessments.

Updated maps were presented to the committee. Primary and secondary access routes were discussed and drawn on the maps. I-84 and Highways 93, 25, and 50 were acknowledged as important. Other important roads were Golf Course Road, North Road, and West Road. Repeater locations were also identified. Final maps should be made by the next meeting.

The Jerome County Assessors office needs to provide the mailing list, so the public surveys can be launched. John will email committee members a copy of the public survey and electronic copy of the Resources and Capabilities Guide.

July 16, 28 and 29, 2004

Ken Homik from NMI visited with Fire Chief Jim Auclair from the Jerome City Fire Department on July 16 and discussed fire-related issues that affect the City of Jerome as well as the county at large. On July 28, Ken Homik, Dennis Thomas (both from NMI), Curtis Jenson from the BLM and Fire Chief Don Utt toured the First Segregation Fire District to learn of the unique issues facing the district. On July 29, Ken Homik, Curtis Jensen and the Assistant Fire Chief of the Jerome Rural Fire District toured the Jerome Rural District. Each of these meetings helped identify the factors that contribute to fire risk throughout the county. The input from the Fire Chiefs was critical in refining community risk assessments and in developing the mitigation activities outlined later in this plan.

August 25, 2004

John McGee opened the meeting with introductions followed by an update on plan development progress. The bulk of the meeting was spent in detailed review of the community assessments by fire district. A review and discussions of mitigation activities that had been identified thus far followed. Any changes and points of clarification were noted and integrated into the community assessments as well as into the mitigation recommendations. The meeting concluded with a review of infrastructure maps and a timeline for plan completion.

2.2.2.3 Public Meetings

Public information meetings were held on September 13, 2004 in Hazelton, September 14, 2004 in Eden, and September 15, 2004 in Jerome, Idaho. The purpose of these meetings was to share information on the planning process with a broadly representative cross section of Jerome County landowners. All meetings had wall maps posted in the meeting rooms with many of the analysis results summarized specifically for the risk assessments, location of structures, fire protection, and related information.

2.2.2.3.1 Hazelton Public Meeting

September 14, Hazelton City Hall- 7:00 to 9:00 PM

2.2.2.3.2 Eden Public Meeting

September 15, 2004 – Eden Senior Center

2.2.2.3.3 Jerome Public Meeting

September 15, 2004 – Jerome County Courthouse- 7:00 to 9:00 PM

2.2.2.3.4 Meeting Notices

Public notices of these meetings were submitted to the **Times News** and the **Northside News**. The notices were asked to run from August 4 to August 12, 2004.

Jerome County Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan

The public is invited to attend meetings and provide input concerning in the Jerome County Fire Mitigation Plan. The Plan includes risk analysis at the community level with predictive models for where fires are likely to ignite and where they are likely to spread rapidly once ignited. The committee involved includes rural and wildland fire districts, land managers, elected officials, agency representatives, and others.

For more information on the Fire Mitigation Plan or if you have questions contact Northwest Management, Inc. project managers William Schlosser or Dennis Thomas at (208) 883-4488, the Jerome local coordinator John McGee at (208) 459-8404, or your County Commissioner.

Meeting dates and locations are listed below:

September 14, 2004 7 PM to 9 PM

Hazelton City Hall

September 15, 2004 7 PM to 9 PM

Eden Senior Center

September 16, 2004 7 PM to 9 PM

Jerome Count Courthouse

2.3 Review of the WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plan

Reviews of sections of this document were conducted by the planning committee during the planning process as maps, summaries, written assessments and mitigation recommendations were completed. These individuals included fire mitigation specialists, fire chiefs, planners, elected officials, BLM representatives and others involved in the coordination process. Preliminary findings were discussed and comments were collected and integrated into the plan.

Amendments and changes to this document should be sent to Northwest Management, Inc. for inclusion in the final plan. The public review process is open from October 4, 2004 – October 14, 2004. All comments should be e-mailed to Brown@consulting-foresters.com or sent to Northwest Management, Inc., PO Box 9748, Moscow, Idaho 83843. Edits will be entered as they are received.

The completed plan will be adopted by the County Commissioners on October 18, 2004, depending on the comments received and any actions needed as a result. Suggestions and comments on this would be appreciated. The ultimate decision is made by the County Commissioners.

You can send comments directly to Brown@consulting-foresters.com or call Northwest Management, Inc. at 208-883-4488.